

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is concerned about military sexual trauma because we know that any type of trauma can have lasting effects on a person's physical and mental health. We also know that people can recover from trauma. Trauma counseling can help veterans to better cope with a past experience of military sexual trauma and to regain their confidence, self-esteem, and hopefully, improve their quality of life.

#### WHAT IS MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA?

Sexual trauma can include sexual harassment or sexual assault. Sexual harassment is any repeated, unwelcome sexual behavior that occurs in the workplace. It includes things like offensive sexual remarks, unwanted sexual advances, or pressure for sexual favors. Sexual assault is any sort of sexual activity in which one person is involved against his or her will. Physical force may or may not be used. Military Sexual Trauma means that a veteran experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault during his or her military service.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT  
YOUR NEAREST VA MEDICAL CENTER,  
VA REGIONAL OFFICE, VET CENTER, OR  
**CALL 1-800-827-1000**

# Military Sexual Trauma MST



**Counseling  
and Treatment**

### WHY AM I BEING ASKED ABOUT SEXUAL TRAUMA AT THE VA?

Since 1992, Public Law has authorized VA to provide counseling and treatment for military sexual trauma. All veterans are being asked about military sexual trauma experiences because VA knows the impact trauma can have on a person's physical as well as emotional health.

Aftereffects of a sexual trauma can include:

- Disturbing memories or nightmares
- Difficulty feeling safe
- Feelings of depression
- Problems with alcohol or other drugs
- Feeling isolated from other people
- Problems with anger or irritability
- Sleep problems

A number of veterans, both women and men, have experienced sexual trauma during their military service. Some veterans have sought counseling and treatment to deal with the effects the trauma has had on their lives. Other may be uncomfortable expressing their feelings or talking about these incidents. They may wonder if they should try to talk about their feelings, or if it will even matter. Yet, these women and men know they have "not felt the same" since the trauma occurred.

### WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IF I HAVE EXPERIENCED MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA?

VA provides priority counseling and treatment for eligible veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma. It is important to know that military sexual trauma counseling is available even if a veteran did not report the incident when it occurred or has not filed a claim for benefits.

You can expect that your VA healthcare provider will ask you if you experienced any military sexual trauma. If you have had these experiences and think you might like to speak to a professional about them, let your healthcare provider know. Your healthcare provider will refer you to a VA or Vet Center counselor. These counselors are knowledgeable about treatments that can help survivors of sexual trauma overcome the psychological aftereffects.

### DOES A VETERAN WHO EXPERIENCED MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA QUALIFY FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION?

A veteran may be qualified for compensation for disabilities incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, including disabilities or injuries resulting from sexual

trauma. A Veterans Service Representative at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) can explain the compensation program in greater detail and assist you in filing a claim. Payment of compensation is based on the degree of the service connected disability or disabilities. VA must first determine whether there are current disabilities related to military service. A veteran who has experienced sexual trauma may or may not have disabilities that can be deemed service-connected. Information about VA benefits and the claim process can be obtained by calling 1-800-827-1000.

### I AM A WOMAN VETERAN WHO DOES NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE SPEAKING TO A MAN ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE. WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INFORMATION?

A woman veteran who would like more information can contact the Women Veterans Program Manager at the local VA Medical Center. Many Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices have a Women Veterans Coordinator available to assist women veterans with information about VA services and benefits. Vet Center staff is available to provide information and counseling for men and women.

